

Good morning. I am Dr. Mike Franklin, Director of Counseling Services at Carroll College. Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning on behalf of our college student population in support of the act requiring the State of Montana to implement a comprehensive suicide prevention program.

One suicide in our community is too many. Yet the second leading cause of death among college students is suicide. (National Center for Health Statistics)

First the facts:

The National American College Health Association Survey revealed...

45% felt so depressed they found it difficult to function

10% had seriously considering attempting suicide (1 in 10 students)

1.3% had attempted suicide

- Spring 2004, American College Health Association Survey

- 47,202 students on 74 campuses

And alcohol plays a role in this, too. The National Collegiate Core Alcohol and Drug Survey reveals the impact of alcohol... And Carroll College fits the national norm.

72% of students had consumed alcohol in the past 30 days

68% of underage students consumed alcohol in the previous 30 days

49% of students reported binge drinking in the previous two weeks (binge drinking is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks in a sitting for a male, 4 or more drinks for a female)

2% tried to commit suicide while under the influence of alcohol

5% had seriously thought about suicide

- Spring 2005 Core Alcohol and Drug Survey (National Survey of Colleges
 - o Over 68,000 students on 133 campuses****

I want to set aside these depressing numbers for the moment and put a human face on college suicide. I have completed three years and am going on my fourth year as Director of Counseling Services at Carroll. For two of the three years we experienced two suicidal situations one year and six the other year. By suicidal situations I mean a student who presents with either suicidal ideations – contemplating suicide, or a suicidal gesture – a non-lethal attempt on their life, or a suicide attempt – the student tried to commit suicide and could easily have completed the act but for one reason or another did not. These figures are well below the national average, and for that I am grateful.

However, for the academic year 2004-05 we were nearly twice the national average with 28 suicidal ideations, gestures, or attempts, and one

completed suicide. That one suicide rocked the community... the Helena community and the Carroll College community. It was devastating. Many of you will recall we had a very popular student-athlete who was a hometown hero right here in Helena, a Capital High graduate. He killed himself with a firearm during fall break.

The number of lives affected by his suicide numbered in the thousands. On Carroll College's campus the tragedy was hard felt. As I mentioned before, we had 28 other suicidal situations... almost one per week of the academic year. Some of these students were having their own personal struggles... usually depression. However, there were several students, some of whom did not even know the young man who killed himself, who presented to Counseling Services facing a difficult time and would say that the young man who killed himself had it right. They wished to be just like him and done with their problems. This is called the cluster effect caused by one suicide in a community. In some ways the suicide still haunts the Carroll campus.

One suicide in any community... including our college campuses in Montana... is one too many. From personal experience at Carroll and from the epidemic of suicides among college students nationwide, I strongly encourage you to support the bill for the act requiring the State of Montana to implement a comprehensive suicide prevention program. With Montana

having the second highest rate of suicide in the nation, a rate that is almost twice the national average, and with suicide being the second leading cause of death among college students with one out of every ten students seriously considering suicide... we can't afford not take action to prevent suicide in our great State of Montana.

Thank you.